



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

A d v o c a c y a n d W i t n e s s P r o g r a m s

Congregational Advocacy and Witness • Holdeen India Program • International Resources • Washington Office for Advocacy

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Board Report

Winter, 2009

Advocacy and Witness Programs

Rev. Meg A. Riley, Director

The change in Administration and Congress impacts every nuance of our work. Our legislative goals and actions of the month remain the same, but how we move towards them is radically different. We are working to become worthy of trust as governors, as Van Jones instructed us last year at the Ware Lecture, rather than scrappy outside protestors. For us, that means engaging UUs to make district visits to their elected officials, engage in public dialogues, participate in creating media, and otherwise expect to be taken seriously as smart, thoughtful contributors to our democracy.

As I write this, Susan Leslie (Director, Congregational Advocacy and Witness), is in Washington DC with thousands of Faith Based Community Organizers, meeting with the Obama transition team to talk about moving forward in key arenas. As ever, we work in coalition with interfaith and secular partners, and showing up where we have said we will means that we are trusted and respected.

Strategically, Bill Sinkford's trip to Africa dovetails with two of our priorities: HIV/ AIDS work and Truth and Reconciliation work. The thinking and defining which the Board did on international mission is paying off royally, and the desire for cloning Rev. Eric Cherry (Director, International Resources Office) is uttered everywhere in his wake.

Adam Gerhardtstein (Acting Director, Washington Office) is really more of an Interim Director in Rob Keithan's absence. Rob, you'll recall, is a ministerial intern at First Church in Portland Oregon this year. Adam is scrutinizing all that we do and reshaping it, streamlining, clarifying and transforming it for this new age. Please note staff changes in the Washington Office, noted in the following pages.

Kathy Sreedhar's work in India continues to embody our very best UU values. Burton Carley will be sorely missed on the Holdeen India Program Advisory Board as he moves on. He has been a wonderful advocate. As you'll see in Kathy's report, much more information about Holdeen is being streamlined so that our congregations can learn about this best-kept-secret UUA program.

Finally, my pet project this year has been working collaboratively with All Souls Church, DC to design and implement a convocation on Justice Theologies and Ministries in January. Gini Courter will be in attendance at this, I am happy to report. Rev. Louise Green and I will use the DVD and book which emerge from the event as we co-dean the UU University Track of the same name in Salt Lake City. The objective is to deeply ground folks in our faith tradition of deeds, not creeds.

UUA Office of International Resources

Rev. Eric Cherry, Director
Nicole McConvery, Administrative Assistant
Erik Resly, Intern

Activities of the International Resources Office

Resourcing

- Provided materials for congregational involvement prior to, during and after President Sinkford's Africa pilgrimage.
- Continued maintaining and expanding www.uua.org/international as a well developed and organized source of resources for congregations.
- Continued expanding and promoting the "Faith Without Borders" program, i.e. through phone calls to newly settled ministers.
- Continued Distribution of bi-weekly e-newsletter "i-news".
- Continued participating in A&W staff group blog and with the UUA task force on staff blogging.
- Continued providing a monthly page for the UUA congregational mailing.
- Continued development of a DVD describing UU Holdeen India program.

Maintaining/Developing relationships

- Organized President Sinkford's visits with new and historic U/U groups in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa.
- Continued collaborating with UU-UNO and UUSC in preparing for and following-up President Sinkford's Africa journey.
- Continued promoting increasing cooperation between UUA and RKK.
- Initiated a sabbatical program for UUA ministers in the Philippines, and eventually other locations.
- Continued meeting and collaborating with representatives of historic international U/U judicatories.
- Continued Supporting development of relationship between Unitarian Union of NE India and UU Holdeen India Program.
- Providing UUA support to the UU Church of the Philippines' "Quimada Center" project.
- Coordinating collaboration between UUPCC, ICUU and UUA.

Institutional Developments

- Memorandum of Understanding with ICUU is finalized.
- The UUA's International Advisory Council held its annual day-long meeting in Boston in early October.
- The UUA's Ambassador corps is functioning extremely well.
- Continued working collaboratively with UUA departments, particularly the A&W staff group on internationally related projects.

HDS Intern

- Initiated an internship placement in the International Office for an HDS student. Erik Resly is doing a fantastic job.

General Assembly

- Planning three international engagement workshops.
- Planning participation of International guests.
- Planning a networking breakfast with leaders of UU organizations with international focuses.
- Planning the UUA President's International breakfast.

Unitarian Universalist Holdeen India Program (UUHIP)

Kathy Sreedhar, Director

UUHIP is working on several projects to provide information about Holdeen partners and their work to congregations and others: the International Resources Office is compiling information to create a DVD on five Holdeen partners; Mark McPeak has produced a DVD from his and Kay Montgomery's visit to Holdeen partners in 2007; and a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington is producing a DVD about Vivek Pandit and Vidhayak Sansad. These videos will be uploaded to the Holdeen section of the UUA website.

We are all devastated by the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. One of our colleagues was killed. Several partners have taken action, including circulating a petition. The message of the petition is "that the terrorists tactics aren't working, that we're more united than ever, united in our love and support to each other, and determined to work together to stop violent extremism. If millions of people sign it [the petition], our message will be unmistakable."

Kathy will be travelling in India for six weeks starting in January 2009 to visit Holdeen partners. She will return in time for the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women in February. One of our partners, Kalpana Kannabiran of Asmita, will also be speaking at this conference.

Washington Office for Advocacy and Office of Congregational Advocacy and Witness

Adam Gerhardstein, Acting Director
Kat Liu, Assistant Director
Grace Garner/Orelia Busch, Legislative
Assistant for Women's Issues, UU Women's
Federation Clara Barton Internship
Lisa Swanson, Legislative Assistant for
Economic and Racial Justice

Alex Winnett, Program Associate for
Peacemaking, Mary Bonner Memorial Intern
Lesley Murdock, Office Manager

Susan Leslie, Director – Congregational
Advocacy and Witness
Audra Friend, Program Associate –
Congregational Advocacy and Witness

Staffing Note: Grace Garner will be leaving the office on January 9th to pursue work within the new Congress or Administration. We have hired Orelia Busch as the new Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues. Orelia comes to us from Madison, Wisconsin and fresh off two Peace Corp years in Burkina Faso.

We have three priorities for this year:

1. Streamlining our Advocacy and Organizing Work

- We have been sharing our 14 legislative objectives with many partner organizations, who generally express admiration for our clarity of vision. To spread awareness within the UU world of the objectives, we are launching a campaign called, *Take the Social Justice Pledge*, asking UUs to make a new year's resolution to engage their congregation with one or more of the objectives. We have created a sign-up web page and we will be following up with pledgers throughout the year with action opportunities.
- To support our objectives, we have thus far carried out *Actions of the Month* on Darfur, Iran, HIV/AIDS and Peacemaking. 2009 will begin with Living Wage, BGLT, Sexuality-Education, and Environmental Justice. We are now getting action resources on the web and in the congregational mailing a full month in advance. We are receiving more and more feedback from congregations who are taking the actions and weaving the themes of the actions into worship and other aspects of church life.
- Many of the coalitions we support prepared transition documents for the Presidential Transition Team. We signed onto omnibus transition documents on Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, Foreign Policy, and Immigration. As our coalitions get meetings with the transition team, our documents are being posted on change.gov.
- A UU was newly elected to Congress, Walt Minnick of Idaho. He joins Rep. Pete Stark of California and Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota. We are in the process of compiling a database of UU elected officials in state and local offices.

2. Strengthening our Congregations

- **Monthly Social Action Chair News** provides information on new resources on various issues and on organizing and advocacy, funding sources, UU conferences and collaborative opportunities, and best congregational practices.
- **Training:** Advocacy & Witness staff and a Social Justice Empowerment facilitator will lead a day-long training on social justice at the Joseph Priestly District annual meeting on April 26th.
- There will be a Social Justice track at GA that will offer training in effective social justice work. A pre-GA event is also being planned for social justice committees and others.

- Susan Leslie and Rev. Jim Eller, All Souls UU Kansas City, MO, will be leading a training on congregation-based community organizing at the Allies for Racial Equity conference on March 14th.
- Alex Winnett will lead a training on peacemaking at Dallas TX Cluster Gathering on Jan. 17th.
- Adam Gerhardstein will lead an Inspired Faith, Effective Action Training with the Chicago Cluster on Feb. 21st.
- Lisa Swanson led a training on immigrant advocacy at an interfaith gathering in Ohio in October.
- **Social Justice Empowerment Workshops** have been getting record-turn out averaging 100 people and garnering rave reviews! A formal evaluation is being conducted this spring and results will be available by General Assembly. Several more congregations have applied this year in addition to the six reported on in the last Board report.
- **Congregation Based Community Organizing & Advocacy:** UUs from congregation-based community organizations around the country, leaders of UU Legislative Ministry in MD, and Advocacy & Witness staff attended a Democracy Day gathering on Dec. 4th that featured Melody Barnes and Valerie Jarrett of the President-Elect's Transition Team/New Administration. The event focused on advocating for universal health care, just immigration reform, and green jobs creation and was co-sponsored by the Interreligious Organizing Initiative, of which the UUA is a member (represented by the Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness). As part of the Democracy Day, an action was held at United Health Care and a rally for immigration reform was held at the Capitol. UUs participated in the 178 legislative visits that were conducted.

3. Supporting the UUA's Four Public Witness Priorities

Economic and Racial Justice

- **Immigration:** The Interfaith Immigration Coalition, of which the Washington Office is a member, authored a transition letter on immigration policy to Obama's transition team and other key administration members. In total, 442 religious groups signed-on to the letter, including 8 UU churches. Via listservs and blogs, staff publicized the Coalition of Immokalee workers (CIW) postcard campaign to urge Subway and Chipotle to pay fair wages to the Florida tomato pickers the CIW represents. Subway agreed to work with CIW on December 2nd. The immigration listserv has grown to 305 members; action rates on the list are above industry averages.
- Two more UU congregations have voted to be part of the New Sanctuary Movement: The Unitarian Fellowship of Lawrence, Kansas and First Unitarian Church in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness represents the UUA in the NSM Coalition and on the board of Interfaith Worker Justice. There are now 20 city/regional coalitions around the country with strong UU participation.
- Congregations are reporting various ways to support immigrants from working with No More Deaths in AZ, joining Welcoming MA, organizing Los Posados events this holiday season, joining rapid response networks, and more.
- The UUA and UUSC co-sponsored an interfaith rally on Oct. 1st calling for a moratorium on ICE raids. UUA President William Sinkford and UUSC President Charlie Clements were among the speakers.
- Plans are underway for the General Assembly Public Witness event that will focus on standing in solidarity with immigrants and state and national legislation.
- **Gulf Coast:** The Washington Office has joined a coalition supporting HR 4048, the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act. To support the bill, staff is developing a targeted strategy, focusing on gaining the support of 12 key Members of Congress. The Gulf Coast listserv has grown to 189 members.

- **Living Wage:** The UUA is a member of the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Coalition and is represented by the Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness. This work is done in partnership with the UU Service Committee. After playing a lead role in achieving the first raise in the federal minimum wage in over ten years in 2007, the coalition is now working for raising the wage again to \$10 in 2010. The UU Congregation of Atlanta sponsored an AIW on '10 in 10' that was adopted by the 2008 General Assembly. The focus now is on education and to gather signatures from faith leaders, the general public, and business leaders on Letters to Congress for delivery in 2009. The UUA January Action of the Month is on Living Wage. Congregations are being encouraged to hold Living Wage Day services in January and a Living Wage Resource Guide with a UU section has been updated by Congregational Advocacy & Witness and Let Justice Roll. Several congregations are already signed up for Living Wage Services as of this writing and over 100 UUs have signed the Letter to Congress. President Sinkford will be preaching at the UU Church of Nashua NH Living Wage Service on January 11th. Results of the month of action will be posted at www.uua.org/socialjustice. A UUSC/UUA Living Wage/Economic Justice list will launch on January 6th.

Gender and Sexual Justice

- **BGLT:** Unfortunately, ballot initiatives discriminating against the BGLT community passed in California, Florida and Arizona this November. The Washington Office partnered with the Office of BGLT Concerns to oppose these measures by producing an election resource for UU congregations, encouraging UUs to make phone calls to voters, and publicizing efforts by UUs to defeat the measures on UUA.org. The office is currently preparing for the February Action of the Month, which asks UUs to lobby their representatives on BGLT issues in their district offices.
- **Sex-Ed:** Plans for the Sexuality Education Advocacy Training continued with a hotel and conference space confirmed. Applications also began being advertised on November 5th.

International Justice and Peacemaking:

- **Peacemaking:** The CSW has released the draft Statement of Conscience. Our office has been helping them gather feedback through outreach and mobilization. Our Action of the Month for December asks that congregations participate in that process and that they engage in intergenerational art projects envisioning a peaceful world. These pieces of art will eventually be delivered to elected officials. We are also working with the Olive Branch Interfaith Peace Partnership to hold the Dr. King Conference at All Souls Unitarian, D.C., on January 19th.
- **Iran:** Washington Office Acting Director, Adam Gerhardtstein, and Rev. William G. Sinkford were invited to a meeting between 150 members of the peace community and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran. Rev. Sinkford was one of 12 persons chosen to address President Ahmadinejad. The meeting was covered by UUA.org and was a source of serious dialogue throughout the on-line UU community.
- **Iraq:** The Washington Office signed-on to a campaign spearheaded by the American Friends Service Committee called the Roadmap to Peace, which proposes a new foreign policy for the next Administration.
- **Global HIV / AIDS:** Rev. Sinkford participated in an audio press conference a week prior to World AIDS Day and came to D.C. to participate in an Interfaith Observance on December 1st. Both events were well covered and attended.
- **Darfur:** September's Action of the Month, Tents of Hope for Darfur, culminated on November 7-9th with a gathering of tents on the National Mall. The UUSC, UUA, and congregations from New York, Texas, Maryland, Colorado, and D.C. all participated.

Environmental Justice

- Towards the end of the 110th legislative session the Washington Office and the Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness along with the UU State Advocacy Networks and the UU Service Committee mobilized UUs to lobby their Representatives to sign the Climate Change Principles letter sponsored by Rep. Henry Waxman (D, CA). It was signed by 152 Members of Congress, far exceeding our goal of 100. With Rep. Waxman now the Chair of the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce, these principles are expected to lay the groundwork for legislation in the 111th Congress. Resources to support congregations were developed by Advocacy & Witness staff and UU Ministry for Earth.
- We have established a UU Environmental Justice working group with representatives from the UUA (Kat Liu), UUSC (Patricia Jones), and UUMFE (Katherine Jesch). UUSC and UUMFE have committed to recruit people from their membership to join the 320 active members of the current UUA action network, which will be rebranded as a joint project. The working group will also release a resource package for Earth Day and April's Action of the Month, witness for the Right to Water in March during Ecumenical Advocacy Days, and pass out action badges from our respective booths at General Assembly. We partnered with Green for All to promote the book of the organization's founder, Van Jones. The book went on to become a best seller.

Winter 2009 Travel Schedules

Rev. Meg A. Riley Director, Advocacy and Witness Programs

January

5-6	Boston, MA	Public Witness and Leadership Council Meetings
14-15	Washington, DC	Faith in Public Life Board Meeting
15-17	Washington, DC	Meetings, Inauguration, and work on convocation
27-29	Baltimore, MD	Convocation on Justice Theologies and Ministries
30	Washington, DC	Capitol Hill Visits

February

4-5	Boston, MA	Public Witness and Leadership Council Meetings
14-24	Washington, DC	Meetings, Planning for UU University

March

3-4	Boston, MA	Public Witness and Leadership Council Meetings
13-14	Vero Beach, FL	Keynote, Northeast Cluster, Florida District
21-28	Washington, DC	Meetings, Sexuality Education and Advocacy Training

Washington Office for Advocacy

**Adam Gerhardstein, Acting Director
Kat Liu, Assistant Director
Orelia Busch, Lisa Swanson, and Alex Winnett**

January

13-17	Dallas, TX	Dallas Cluster Presentation on Peacemaking (Alex)
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February

4-6	Boston, MA	Meetings with UUA staff (all Washington Office)
21-22	Chicago, IL	Inspired Faith, Effective Action Training (Adam + 1)
26-1	Houston, TX	UU Women's Convocation (Orelia Busch)

March

7	Cincinnati, OH	Peacemaking Symposium (Alex – tentative)
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Kathy Sreedhar, Director – UUHIP

January

2-31	India	Meetings with Holdeen partners
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February

1-12	India	Meetings with Holdeen partners
26-Mar 1	Houston, TX	International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women

Rev. Eric Cherry, Director – UUA Office of International Resources

January

13-14	Philadelphia, PA	Heeding God's Call: A Gathering on Peace
21-23	Bedford, MA	UUPCC board meeting
6-8	Houston, TX	Mid-size Church Conference

February

20-21	Salem, OR	PNWD AGM
22	Newburyport, MA	Preaching/Workshop
26-Mar 1	Houston, TX	International Convocation of UU Women

Susan Leslie, Director – Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness

January

27-29	Washington, DC	UU Convocation on Social Justice & Theology All Souls Church, Unitarian
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February

4	Chicago, IL	Interreligious Organizing Initiative Meeting ELCA Headquarters
11	Boston, MA	UUA Committee on Socially Responsible Investing

March

13-15	Kansas City, MO	Allies for Racial Equity Conference All Souls Unitarian Church
16-19	Boston, MA	Commission on Social Witness